media material releasing said therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time when said drug delivery unit is placed in said round window niche of said subject;

placing said drug delivery unit at least partially in said round window niche of said subject; and

allowing said drug delivery unit in said round window niche to release said therapeutic agent therefrom so that said therapeutic agent comes in contact with said round window membrane, passes therethrough, and enters said inner ear.

2. (Reiterated) The method of claim 1 wherein said drug delivery unit is spaced apart from said round window membrane in said round window niche.

3. (Reiterated) The method of claim 1 wherein said drug delivery unit is positioned against and in direct contact with said round window membrane in said round window niche.

4. (Reiterated) A method for delivering therapeutic agents into the inner ear of a living subject through the round window niche and the round window membrane thereof, said method comprising:

providing a drug delivery unit comprised of at least one biodegradable controlled release carrier media material and at least one therapeutic agent combined therewith, said carrier media material releasing said therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time when said drug delivery unit is placed in said round window niche of said subject;

placing said drug delivery unit at least partially in said round window niche of said subject; and

allowing said drug delivery unit in said round window niche to release said therapeutic agent therefrom so that said therapeutic agent comes in contact with said round window membrane, passes therethrough, and enters said inner ear.

5. (Reiterated) The method of claim 4 wherein said drug delivery unit is spaced apart from said round window membrane in said round window niche.

6. (Reiterated) The method of claim 4 wherein said drug delivery unit is positioned against and in direct contact with said round window membrane in said round window niche.

7. (Withdrawn) A method for delivering therapeutic agents into the inner ear of a living subject through the round window niche and the round window membrane thereof, said method comprising:

providing a drug delivery apparatus comprising:

an elongate member comprising a first end and a second end; and

a drug delivery unit secured to said first end of said elongate member, said drug delivery unit being comprised of at least one controlled release carrier media material and at least one therapeutic agent combined therewith, said carrier media material releasing said therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time when said drug delivery unit is placed in said round window niche of said subject;

placing said first end of said elongate member and said drug delivery unit secured thereto at least partially in said round window niche of said subject; and

allowing said drug delivery unit in said round window niche to release said therapeutic agent therefrom so that said therapeutic agent comes in contact with said round window membrane, passes therethrough, and enters said inner ear.

8. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 7 wherein said elongate member comprises a solid rod.

9. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 7 wherein said elongate member comprises at least one passageway therethrough from said first end to said second end.

10. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 7 wherein said elongate member is comprised of at least one electrically conductive material.

11. (Withdrawn) The method of Claim 7 wherein said carrier media material is biodegradable.

12. (Withdrawn) A method for delivering therapeutic agents into the inner ear of a living subject through the round window niche and the round window membrane thereof, said method comprising:

providing a drug delivery apparatus comprising:

an elongate electrically conductive member comprising a first end and a second end; and

a drug delivery unit secured to said first end of said conductive member, said drug delivery unit being comprised of at least one controlled release carrier media material and at least one therapeutic agent combined therewith, said carrier media material releasing said therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time when said drug delivery unit is placed in said round window niche of said subject;

positioning said first end of said conductive member and said drug delivery unit secured thereto at least partially in said round window niche of said subject;

placing at least a portion of said first end of said conductive member in direct contact with an internal ear component selected from the group consisting of said round window membrane and at least one ear tissue structure adjacent to said round window membrane; and

allowing said drug delivery unit in said round window niche to release said therapeutic agent therefrom so that said therapeutic agent comes in contact with said round window membrane, passes therethrough, and enters said inner ear.

13. (Withdrawn) The method of claim 12 wherein said carrier media material is biodegradable.

14. (Withdrawn) A drug delivery apparatus for delivering therapeutic agents into the inner ear of a living subject through the round window niche and the round window membrane thereof comprising:

an elongate member comprising a first end and a second end; and

a drug delivery unit secured to said first end of said elongate member, said drug delivery unit being comprised of at least one controlled release carrier media material and at least one therapeutic agent combined therewith, said carrier media material releasing said therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time when said drug delivery unit is placed in said round window niche of said subject.

15. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein said elongate member comprises a solid rod.

16. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein said elongate member comprises at least one passageway therethrough from said first end to said second end.

17. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of Claim 14 wherein said carrier media material is biodegradable.

18. (Withdrawn) A drug delivery apparatus for delivering therapeutic agents into the inner ear of a living subject through the round window niche and the round window membrane thereof comprising:

an elongate member comprised of at least one electrically conductive material, said elongate member comprising a first end and a second end; and

a drug delivery unit secured to said first end of said elongate member, said drug delivery unit being comprised of at least one controlled release carrier media material and at least one therapeutic agent combined therewith, said carrier media material releasing said therapeutic agent from said drug delivery unit over time when said drug delivery unit is placed in said round window niche of said subject.

19. (Withdrawn) The apparatus of claim 18 wherein said carrier media material is biodegradable.

Add new claims 20-25:

-- 20. (New) A method for delivering an agent to an inner ear of a subject, the method comprising:

placing a drug delivery unit at least partially within a round window niche of a subject, wherein the drug delivery unit comprises at least one synthetic controlled release carrier media material and at least one agent, and wherein the carrier media material is adapted to release the agent from the drug delivery unit over time following said placing; and

wherein the agent is released from the drug delivery unit to contact and pass through a round window membrane to enter an inner ear of the subject.

21. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the drug delivery unit is spaced apart from the round window membrane in the round window niche.

22. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the drug delivery unit is positioned against and contacts the round window membrane in the round window niche.

23. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the subject is human.

24. (New) The method of claim 1, wherein the subject is human.

25. (New) The method of claim 4, wherein the subject is human.--